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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 001476

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DEPARTMENT FOR AS A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/18/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [MARR](#) [AU](#) [UN](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SPLA FORCES ENCOUNTER SAF FORCES IN EL-MUGLAD;
SITUATION RESOLVED PEACEFULLY

REF: KHARTOUM 1415

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b)
and (d)

¶1. (SBU) On Sept 18, media reported that on September 17, elements of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) encountered Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) troops in El-Muglad for the second time in a month. The UN told embassy that SPLA Commander Hassan Hamed along with ten soldiers attempted to enter El-Muglad when they encountered SAF troops. According to UN reports, the SPLA element attempted to flee and discharged their weapons in the air. Townspeople intervened between the two forces before SAF troops reacted to the SPLA weapons fire. The UN reported that the security situation in El-Muglad is calm and the situation is normal.

¶2. (SBU) The UN reported that the SPLA forces came to El-Muglad to meet with Major General (Ret.) El-Gunaid Hassan El-Ahmer, former commander of Murahileen forces. The UN added that Murahileen forces, composed of Misereya and Rizaigat tribe members, escorted the Babnousa-El-Muglad-Aweil-Wau rail line during the war, defending it against the SPLA.

¶3. (C) Director of Information Chaat Paul Nur in the Office of the First Vice President Salva Kiir told poloff that former militia in the north who want to join the SPLA have no choice but to travel to the south and meet in a border town such as El-Muglad. He said that according to the CPA militias who wanted to join either the SAF or SPLA needed to have done so by July 9. He said, "They are in a bind and it's a matter of personal interest to travel to the south if they want to join a militia (such as the SPLA)."

¶4. (C) Comment: El-Muglad is a natural transit point for returning refugees and a logical meeting place for former militia in the north wanting to join the SPLA in the south. At the same time, there are a number of SAF troops in the vicinity guarding the oil resources surrounding the town of Abu Gabra, 50 miles to the west of El-Muglad. While the good news is that in each case the situation was resolved peacefully, the mixture means El-Muglad may be in the news so long as SPLA and SAF troops are in proximity to each other and until the nearby Abyei issue is defused and North-South tensions lowered. There is however, an ethnic-political dimension that will be hard to overcome: that former "murahileen" (Khartoum armed and supported Arab militia, similar to today's Janjawid in Darfur) would prefer to join the ranks of the SPLA, rather than remain cannon fodder for the Northern Arab, Muslim brethren, is a bitter pill for the NCP and SAF to swallow. End comment.
FERNANDEZ